

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子と狼

VOLUME 20

A TASTE OF
POISON

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



子連水狼

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連次狼

story

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art

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A TASTE OF POISON

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

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狼



VOLUME

20

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB



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the ninety-eighth

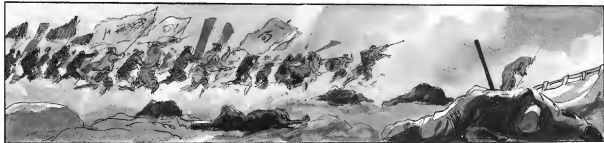


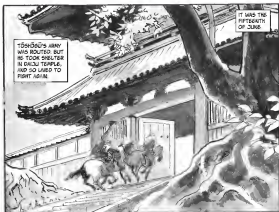
**Good
Fortune,
Ill
Fortune**



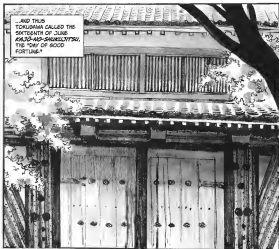




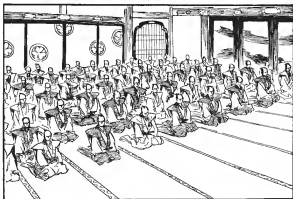




...AND THIS
TOKUGAWA CALLED THE
SIXTEENTH OF JUNE
KAIJO-NO-SAKURITSUKU,
THE "DAY OF GOOD
FORTUNE!"

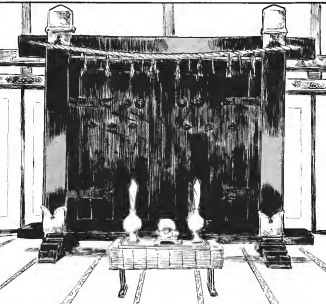


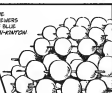
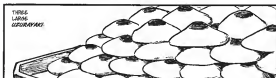
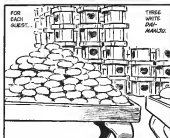
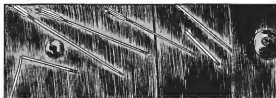






ON THIS DAY, THE SHOGUN
PRESENTED GO-KASHI
SWEETCARDS TO THE GO-SANKE,
THE FUDOMI DAIMYO, THE FUDOMI
DAIMYO, THE KOTAN FUDOMI,
AND THE OMOYE-KOKA
SHOGUN.



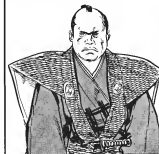




AND FIVE
TO SIX
COATED
POISON



PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION
OF THE CARDS WAS OVERSEEN BY
THE HEAD OF THE JEDONYAMU



THE JEDONYAMU WERE THE
TASTERS FOR THE SHOGUN FAMILY.
THEY WERE CALLED JEDONYAMU,
OR "OFFICIAL MOUTHS," BECAUSE
THEY CHECKED FOR POISON WITH
THEIR OWN TONGUES.





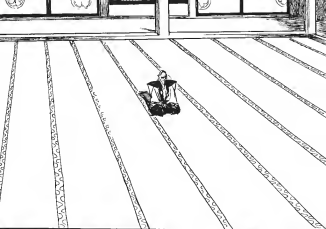


















FOON!
YOU BRING
YOUR SHIP BACK TO
MY SALES FESTIVAL
AND YOU THINK
YOU DESERVE
MY CAKES??



MY
LORD!!

JUST
YOU'RE
A SHOCKED-
BACKED MAN!
I PITY
YOU!



I LONG
YOU ARE-
NO-ONE!



THE WOLFS
READY IN
TEN DAYS!







YAKU-SAMA...
YOU'VE LOST
FACE. THE DAIMYO
AND JIKISAN
ARE ABOUT TO
PLOT AGAINST
YOU.

ONLY
FEAR OF
YOUR BEHAVING
POWER
RESTRAINS
THEM.



PAUL...
....



AND YOUR
POWER, YAKU-SAMA,
DERIVES FROM OUR
LORD'S DEEP TRUST.
HE LETS YOU
OFF EASILY...



...WHERE
AM I OTHER
PAUL...
....



YOU
ENJOY
HIS TRUST
AS WELL.

MY POISON
TASTERS
WET ALL OUR
LORD EATS.

OF
COURSE
I DO.



I HEAR
RUMORS
YOU TAKE
ADVANTAGE
OF IT.



OH, WITH WOMEN,
I SUPPOSE?
LOOK AT ME! A
FACE SO UGLY THEY
ONCE CALLED ME
KAWA THE FREAK!
IT'S NOT EASY
TO FIND WILLING
WOMEN.

BUT I ENJOY
THE PLEASURE AS
MUCH AS ANY MAN,
AND MAYBE MORE.
AND SO, PEOPLE
THINK THAT I FORCE
WOMEN TO OBEY
...BUT
RUMORS.



BUT TO THE
FOUNTAIN FARYO-SAMA,
WHEN THE JACKHORN
RE-CONQUERS,
YOU MAY BE
INVESTIGATED.

THUS OUR
LORD SAYS
TEN DAYS.

IRH...

SO...
WHAT WILL
YOU DO?



WHAT DO
YOU THINK?
I WILL
CRUSH HIM!

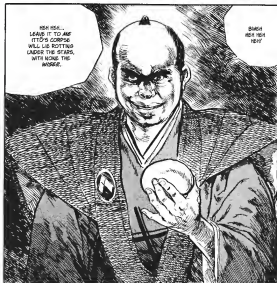
HE'S LIKE A
RAT IN A TRAP
HERE IN EDO!
WE'LL GET HIM
AT LAST!

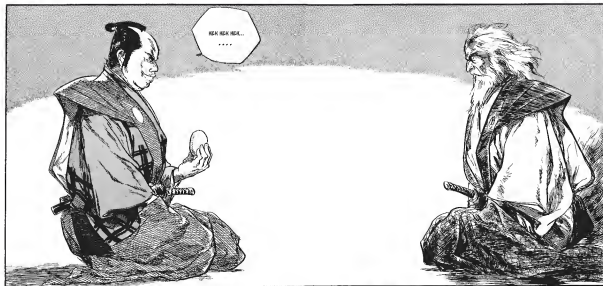














A LITTLE
SLOW, ARE WE?
OR DO YOU *NEED*
TO SAY THEY'VE
BEEN SEARCHING
HIGH AND LOW...
WITHOUT
RESULT?

HMM



SO?
NOT EVEN
THE FULL NIGHT
AND RESOURCES
OF THE YAMU
CLAN CAN
FIND HIM.

FRANKLY...
THIS IS SO

HIS FEINT COST
US TWO DAYS.
I'D SENT MY MEN
TO FORTIFY KAWASAKI
AND FUKUSHIMA...



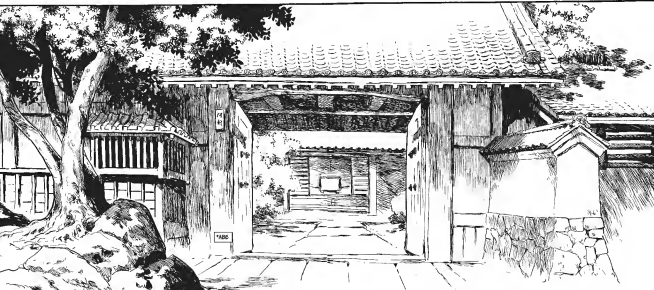
...BUT THEY
RETURNED
LAST NIGHT,
AND NOW THE
HUNT IS ON.

WE'LL
HAVE HIM
SOON.



WILL YOU
REALLY?















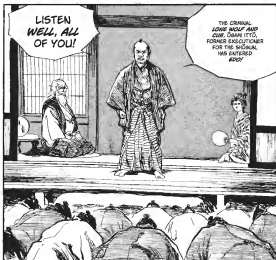
CHAM ITTO'S
STILL ALIVE!
HE SAYS...
OR HE DOES.

THESE MEN
HANDLE ALL THE
FOOD IN EDO.
THEY'LL FIND HIM...
AND SOON!



TRULY
A JEDDOP-
FACE...

...AND NO-
KUN-SENNA!



LISTEN
WELL, ALL
OF YOU!

THE CRIMINAL
LONG WOLF AND
GURU, CHAM ITTO,
FORMER EXECUTIVE
FOR THE SHOGUN,
HAS ENTERED
EDO!









EVERY
KNOWN POISON...
AND ALL MY
OWN SPECIAL
MIXES.

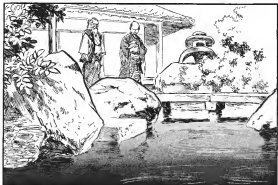


FOR
EXAMPLE...
ADD HONEY
VINE VERNON TO
MOM'S MOO-
TWICE AS
POWERFUL

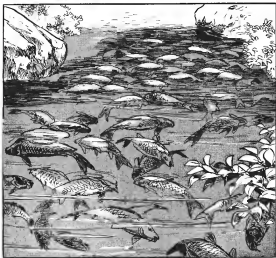
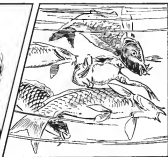


ANDROEDA,
GENISTA, YELLOW
RHODODENDRON
WY. FASCIANESSA
KALOPHAN.
KURURI...

I GROW THEM,
EXTRACTED THEM,
REFINED THEM TO
BE JOZOLESS AND
PAINLESS

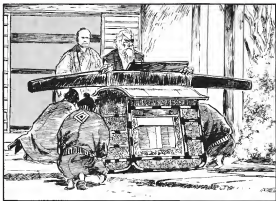








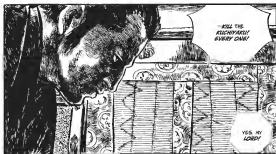












the ninety-ninth

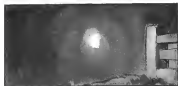
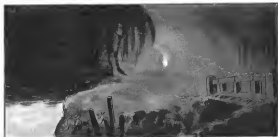


Lair of the Night- hawks











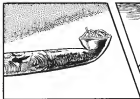


















WORDS
LIKE A
CHARM...











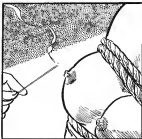












HEH HEH HEH...
LOOKING A LITTLE
PALE? I GUESS YOU'VE
HEARD ABOUT OUR
INDIGENES!

FUCK YOU,
YOU
WHORE!

FIRST,
WE BURN OFF
YOUR ANTIPOES.
SEEK THEN WE
WORK DOWN TO
YOUR PUSSEY.
THEN DRIP
INSIDE!

AND LAST,
WE BURN OUT
YOUR EYEBALLS...
SO GET READY!
OF COURSE,
IF YOU APOLOGIZE
NICELY ENOUGH,
I MIGHT LET YOU
JOIN MY GANG
INSTEAD.

NOT!
OHAY, THEN—
BURN AWAY!

HEH...
SHE'S GOT
GUTS.

YOU
READY...?

HEH, HEH!
YEAH!

WHY-WHY
STOP!

SHEDUP!
IT'S TOO
LATE!

I KNOW!
BUT,
A SNAKE!
A LAST
SMOKE!

HEH...?

I GOT
THE BEST
BIRD!











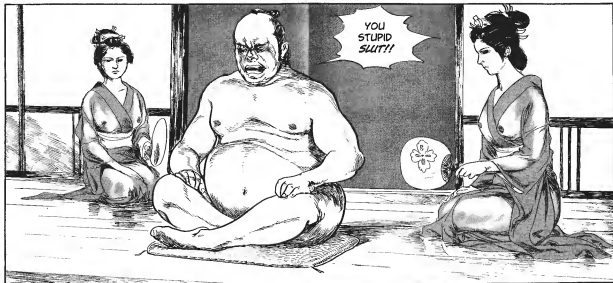






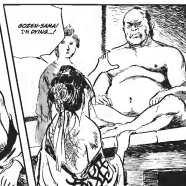




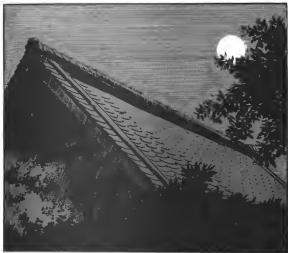


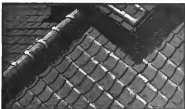
DID YOU
FORGET?!

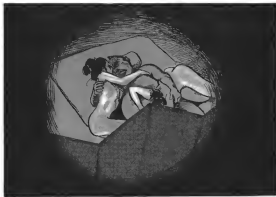














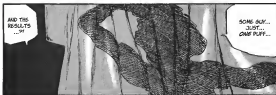




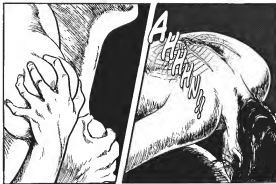


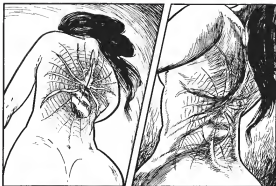






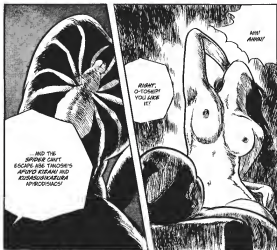


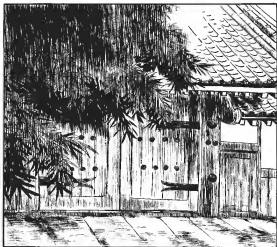
















the hundredth

Blighted Leaves













HE'S A
CONTRACT
KILLER THE
BEST!



DAMN...
AND RUN WITH THAT
CLUT. JERRY'S DUMB.
DAD OR AUNT. IT AINT
SMART TO TAKE A
KID ALONG ON
MURDER.



HEY, DOLL!
ANOTHER
BOWL OF
SOUP!

COMING
UP!



SECONDS
ON THE
JACK.
HERE!

GOT
YU?



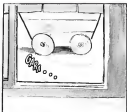
SO FASTER...
WHAT IF WE
SHOT HIM...?

WE TELL
HIS THOUGH.
THE JERRY-
FARM!



HEAT? THE
POISON
TASTERY?

NOT THE
JERRY...?



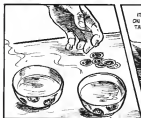
























I EXPECTED
YAGFLL... BUT
THE DOKOMO
KUCHIYAKUP?



IN MY DAY
IT WAS OLD AND
REMARKABLE

ALWAYS UPRIGHT
AND MODEST...
A STEADY CRATZSMAN.
WHY WOULD HE HUNT
FOR THE KAWA...?

GARA GARA GARA



IT'S BEEN FOUR
DAYS SINCE WE SET
FOOT IN SRO, AND THE
YAGYU KIBRAFT YET
STRUCK. THEY FEAR
A DISTURBANCE...?

PERHAPS
AND YET, THAT IS
UNLIKE ANTONIO.
NO, THE ASSASSIN
MUST BE OUR
NEW GUEST...

GARA GARA GARA



...AND
THEN THE
YAGYU.











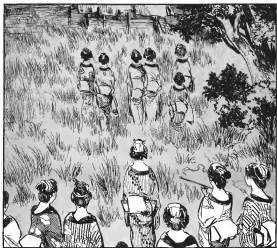






































THEN...
HAVE A CUP,
JOE-KOMMA-
SAN



SOMETIMES
EVEN WE
NIGHTMARES
NEED TO
DROWN OUR
SORROW.

THINK
OF ME...
OLD SOLDIER...
A FALLEN WARRIOR
HAS ONLY ONE
TEARS, MAY



PLEASE
DOWN ONE
WITH ME.



I DON'T
DRINK, BUT I
HONOR THE
SPIRIT.





















THE BRANCHES
INTERTWINE,
FLOWERING WITH
ALL THEIR STRENGTH
IN THE TOO SHORT
SUMMER.

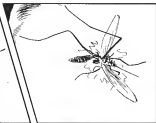


BUT
SOMETIMES
THERE'S ONE
BLIGHTED LEAF,
A SINGLE LEAF
THAT WITHERS
AN ENTIRE
THicket.

IF WE
STAYED, WE
WOULD BE THAT
BLIGHTED LEAF,
DESTROYING
YOU ALL.









*the hundred
and first*

Abe- No- Kaii

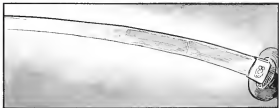
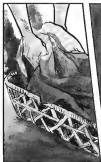














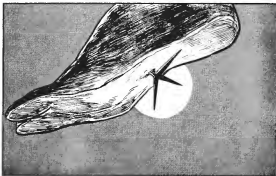
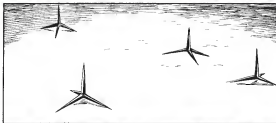


















CAN'T
MOVE, CAN'T
JUMP

EH, MY
YARDY
LAPDOP



IF YOU THOUGHT
MADNESS WERE
JUST FOR SHOWBOY,
BAP HESTAGE
ASH-MO-KAI LIKES
THEM, TOO.



HAPEE
I'M NOT AS
WIDE AS YOU
MINDA...

...BUT MY TOYS
ARE ANYWAY MORE
EFFECTIVE. IT'S THE
UPPER GROUND,
YOU SEE?



JUST A
SANDWICH IN
THE BLOOD, AND
YOU'RE ALL ADONE.
RIGHT? CAN'T
EVEN WASH
YOUR FEARAWAY
KOH HOA...

AWAY I SAW THROUGH
RETSUBO! AWAY AWAY!
HE FIGURED LONG WOLF
AND I WOULD FIGHT IT OUT,
AND AWAY KILL THE BEAST.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE
TALKING ME, SEE?



I'VE BEEN
LETTING YOU RUN
LOOSE, SO RETSUBO
WOULD THINK I FELL FOR
IT. "CATCH THE SHARKS
WHILE THEY FIGHT,"
HE THINKS. BUT THINK
AGAIN, OLD MAN!



SWAM
AM AWAY
THE INVINCIBLE
KARMA RETSUBO,
AFRAID OF AWAY
BUT HE'S RIGHT?
HE SHOULD
SEE!



AFTER
I BURY
THE WOLF,
HEH HEH...

—I
BURY AWAY,
LAST OF THE
YAGHUR!

THAT...
THE POWER
OF THE
SPOOKS...
IN AWAY HANDS!

























HEH HEH...
HE WON'T DO
THAT EASILY.
IT'S JUST A
TRICK.



WORTH A
TRY, THOUGH.
SOMETIMES
EVEN FROGS
SLIP UP.

BUT...
NOT EVEN
A WOLF...
NOT IN THE
DARK!



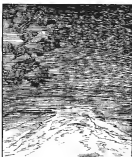
THE YAMU
AND THE
KUROKUMA
TRIED EVERY
TRICK.

HE'S NOT
ARMED, HE'S A
JEWEL WOLF. IF A
WOLF SKIPPED
THE GROUND,
IT'D FIND THEM.

EITHER
WAY, WE
LEARN
SOMETHING.



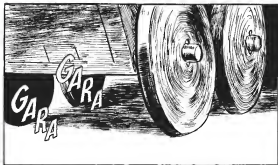
SAVED HER HEH,
NOW IT'S GETTING
ENTERTAINING!

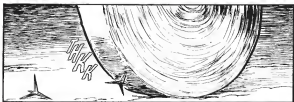










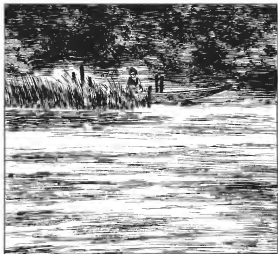






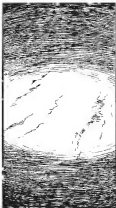


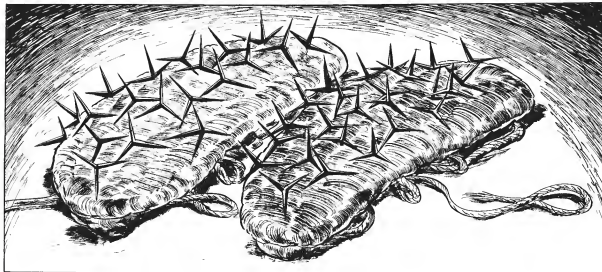


















A MESSAGE
FROM
LONG WOLF—
"THIS MON'Y
WORK
TWOBT"

HE'LL GO
BAREFOOT
NOW



HE SEES
THROUGH
WALLS, THEY
SAY

AND
THROUGH
HIS SANDALS!
NOW HE'LL
TWIN HIS
FEET.



I...I'VE
NEVER BEEN
AFRAID IN MY LIFE
AND AT LAST,
AN OPPONENT
THAT SCARES ME
TO DEATH!

HOW
BIG HE IS...
HOW BIG
HE IS!



NO
WONDER
RETSUDD CAN'T
TOUCH HIM,
DARBY!





















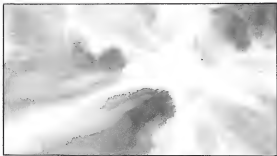


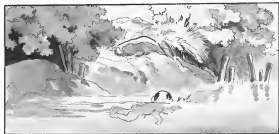
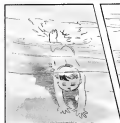
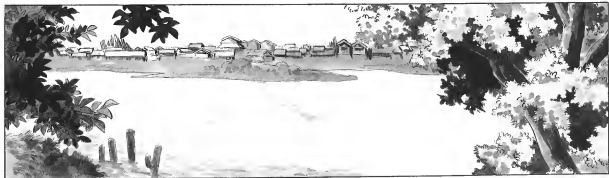


*the hundred
and second*

A Taste of Poison

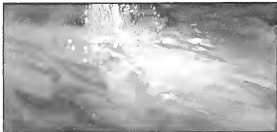


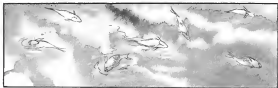


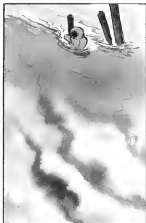












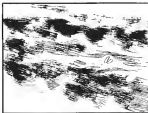




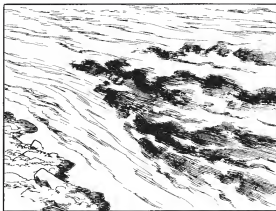
AWH, AHHHH!
A LOVELY POISON...
DISSOLVES IT IN WATER
AND IT SPREADS
A HUNDRED
TIMES OVER

ONE TOUCH
AND IT'S GONE!
DON'T GO NEAR
THE WATER...
ONE, TWO, THREE!



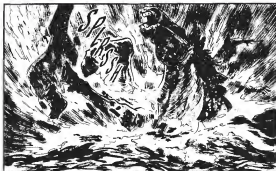


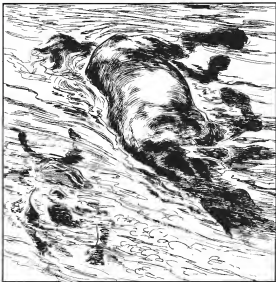
















UNTIL NOW
WE'VE FOUGHT ARMED
WITH HUMAN ABILITY!
BUT THIS MAN WALKS
THE WAY OF THE BEAST,
IN HUMAN FORM.

HE SCOFFS
AT BUSHIDO
AND THE WAY OF
THE SWORD.

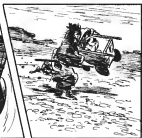
BUT
WHO IS
HE??



I CAN'T
BELIEVE HE'S
ONE OF ARE
SHAMOTO'S
KNIGHTS...

BUT HE
KNOWS
FISICAL, AND
DOES IT...







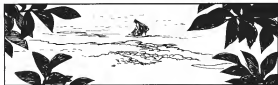








































FROM NOW ON,
I GIVE THE ORDERS...
UNLESS YOU WANT
THAT PAIN BACK!



GO,
JINNA!



I AM
THE PERSON
YOU ARE THE
POISONED!

YOU'RE
IN APOUR
ADVERT, STINKING
OF POISON!
YOU'LL NEVER
ESCAPE ME!









I SUSPECT
THAT IN TIME,
HE'LL SUCCEED.



KEEP
WATCHING
UNTIL
HE KILLS LONG
WOLF...



...THEN
STRIKE!



RETSUDS-
SAMA...

...I'VE DONE
EVERYTHING
I CAN FOR
YOU.







ALL...
ADDICT?



TO ANSWER
MY LORD!



I KNEW
HOW THIN I
WAS HIS AND
GOT THIS FAR...
BUT NO
FARTHER







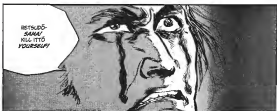
THE YAMU
AND OSAKI ITTO
HIS BLOOD ENEMIES
TO PURGE THE NATION
AND SAVE THE CLAN,
YOU MUST FIGHT HIM
YOURSELF!



PEOPLE
WILL WHISPER
THROUGHOUT JAPAN,
"THE WARRIOR YAMU
USED A POWWORM TO
DEFEAT LONG WOLF"
YOU'LL BE A
LAUGHING
STOCK!



WILL YOUR CHILDREN—
KIMARO, HYDRO, SUMMI,
AND SAYAMA-SAMA—
REJOICE IN THEIR SHAMES?
THEIR LIVES LOST
IN PURSUIT OF THE
SHAMEFUL DEED?



ITSUKUO-
SAMA!
KILL ITTO
YOURSELF!



ASH-KO-KIM
IS NO SAMURAI
HE'LL STOP AT
NOTHING FOR POWER
HE'S A BEAST,
DEVOID OF SHYD!

SEE NOW
HE THOUGHT HE
COULD TURN ME
WITH APOYO!



NO ROBOT,
NO SHYDOKY, WOULD
SURRENDER TO APOYO...
BUT HE DOESN'T
UNDERSTAND! DON'T
LET SUCH A BEAST KILL
OGARI ITTO!



ITTO'S A
ROBOT AMONG
ROBOTS LIKE
THE FATHER!

HE HAS THE
FATHER LETTER,
YET HE DOESN'T
USE IT, BECAUSE
HE'S A MAN OF
HONOR!



RETSUDO-
SAMA...?
RECONSIDER!







LOVE WOLF AND CLUB ONCE: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

afuryō

A type of opiate drug.

anko

Sweet red bean paste.

asebi

Persea japonica, Japanese andromeda, a broad-leaved evergreen shrub. Andromedotoxins (grayanotoxins) are water-soluble diterpenoid compounds. Leaves and flower nectar are sources of the toxin.

bakufu

The government. The shogun, his councilors, and his senior officials.

buke

A samurai household.

bushi

A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō

The way of the warrior. Also known as *shidō*.

cho

Approximately 300 meters.

daikan

An official who collected taxes owed to Edo and oversaw public works, agriculture, and other projects administered by the central government.

daikansho

The office of the *daikan*.

daimyō

A feudal lord.

dokumi

Poison taster.

Edo

The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shōgunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo.

Fudai daimyō

The inner circle of clans pledging allegiance to the Tokugawa. The Fudai clans were Tokugawa allies even before Tokugawa Ieyasu's decisive victory of Sekigahara that launched the Tokugawa shogunate.

go-kashi

Cakes and candy. The "go-" is an honorific because the cakes come from the shōgun. There are several categories of wagashi (Japanese sweetcakes): *Manju* have sweet paste from *azuki* red beans, wrapped in a soft flour shell. *Mochi* are made from pounded rice, often with sweet paste inside. *Kikar* is a semi-hardened, sweet jelly. There are hundreds of kinds of wagashi, often unique to the towns where they are made.

han

A feudal domain.

honorifics

Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *e* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Love Wolf and Cub*:

chan – for children, young women, and close friends

dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures

san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals

sama – used for superiors

sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

jiiji

Old man. Grandfather. Both intimate, and condescending.

jikisan hatamoto

Daimeyō directly serving the shōgun, with the right to meet him face to face. Their title, “standard bearers,” came from history, when the warriors who would be promoted in peacetime to *hatamoto* had been the most trusted allies of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa shōgun.

jitte

A specialized weapon carried by street cops. About 18 inches long, with no cutting edge — just two prongs designed to catch and snap off an opponent’s sword blade.

kajō

Good fortune. June 16 was a popular folk festival long before Ieyasu’s narrow escape. In its original incarnation, sixteen sweetcakes were offered to the gods to ward off disease, and eaten afterwards,

kizami

Tobacco was extremely expensive in early Japan, and the preferred form was finely shredded, hair-like *kizami*, rolled into tiny balls and smoked by inhaling deeply in a few quick puffs.

koku

A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han*’s wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

kōtai yoroi

Retainers of *hatamoto daimeyō* based in Edo for their lords’ visits to the capital.

kusasugikazura

Asparagus cochinchinensis.

machi-bugyō

The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners; samurai in Edo were controlled by their own *daimeyō* and his officers. The *machi-bugyō* had an administrative staff and a small force of armed policemen at his disposal.

makibishi

Caltrops. A traditional ninja weapon, designed to always leave a point up. Intended to slow down pursuers.

omote-kōke

Untitled shogunal liaison officers in charge of protocol and relations with the imperial court in Kyōto.

rōnin

A masterless samurai. Literally, “one adrift on the waves.” Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became “hired guns” for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

sankyō sanke

The three sub-branches of the Tokugawa clan. When there was no heir to the main Tokugawa line, one would be picked from two of these clans, while the *fuku-shōgun* (Vice-shōgun) always came from the third.

shinobi

A generic term for *ninja*, meaning “one who moves in secrecy.” *Ninja* had their heyday in the time of warring states before the rise of the Tokugawa clan. Originally mercenaries serving different warlords, by the Edo period they were in the service of the central government. The most famous *shinobi* were the *ninja* of Iga and Kaga, north of Kyoto. The *Kumakawa* that appear in *Love Wolf and Cab* were officially the laborers and manual workers in Edo Castle. Whether they truly served as a secret spy corps is lost in history.

shōyaku

The other titled posts in the shōgunate.

takenigusa

Maclaya cordata.

Tōshōgū

Tokugawa Iyasu.

Tozama daimyō

Daimyō who allied to the Tokugawa side only after the Tokugawa victory at Sekigahara.

vet

To examine or appraise expertly.

yakuza

Japan’s criminal syndicates. In the Edo period, *yakuza* were a common part of the landscape, running houses of gambling and prostitution. As long as they did not overstep their bounds, they were tolerated by the authorities, a tradition little changed in modern Japan.

yotaka

Literally “nighthawk.” Streetwalkers, among the lowest ranks of Edo period prostitutes.

yuzuri

Daphniphyllum macropodum.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays, and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kazure Okami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryōichi Ikegami, was

produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Senjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Samurai 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven that philosophy true.



GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibui*, or “paper-play” narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-ben* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-ben* readers.

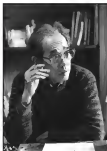
In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Doguski*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Akuma*

Okami (*Love Wolf and Club*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the “golden duo” and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



THE RONIN REPORT

By David S. Hofhine

An Authentic Example of a Dotanuki School Sword: part one

For the last several years, I have been working full time as a professional *togishi* (Japanese sword polisher) and have recently had the rare pleasure and honor of working on an authentic Dotanuki school *katana*. This is the same Dotanuki school of sword-smithery that is often mentioned in the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series, and which allegedly produced the *katana* sword that was used by Itto Ogami. Hence, this article is something of a sequel to the essay originally presented in *Lone Wolf and Cub* volume twelve entitled “The Dotanuki Sword of Lone Wolf and Cub.”

To give a complete description of this particular sword and its unique Higo school mountings, it will be necessary to give a short overview on the subject of Japanese sword-smithery and what goes into a Japanese *koshirae* (sword mounting). Japanese swords present a very deep field of study. There are many top universities in Japan that offer advanced post-graduate degrees in sword study, and within this field has grown an enormous vocabulary of terms to describe how certain features of a blade look. Terms such as “wind-blown sand” and “moonlight reflecting on still water” are two examples of the descriptive terms used. There are, in fact, entire books devoted to defining the hundreds of terms used by sword aficionados. I will be using primarily English equivalents to facilitate understanding by the occidental reader, but will also include basic Japanese terms as needed to describe this sword and its features as accurately as possible.

Forging a good sword is difficult. To maintain a good cutting ability and to stand up to heavy use, the cutting edge must be very hard. In addition to having a hard edge, the blade must also be so tough it will not easily break. Finally, a blade must be rigid, yet resistant to bending, and if bent should spring back into shape to a reasonable degree.



These characteristics are not necessarily compatible, and therein lies the problem. For example, as steel is made to be harder, it also becomes more brittle. Many different steps must be taken while forging a blade to arrive at a balance that holds all of the best characteristics of a finished sword and fewest of the worst. Each step in the forging process has an effect on the overall appearance and functionality of the finished blade. Ancient Japanese swordsmiths made numerous ingenious innovations to solve these problems, resulting in the Japanese sword's famous attributes as a weapon and its unique physical characteristics.

The Dotanuki described in this article would be defined as a *katana*, that is, the classical "samurai sword" with a single edged, curved blade, usually about 25" to 29" long (fig. 1). Traditionally, a *katana* is also defined by a ridge, called a *shinogi*, which runs the full length of the blade, separating the bevel of the lower surface from the flat part of the upper surface. This particular *katana* has a blade length of 26 3/8", measured from the tip of the point to the notch where the blade ends and the tang begins, and is very similar to the *katana* depicted throughout *Love Wolf and Cub*.

One of the most striking features of this, or any other Japanese



Fig. 2

sword, is the tempering pattern, or *hamon*, that runs along the cutting edge of the blade (fig. 2). The edge of a Japanese sword is hardened in a process called *yaki-ire*. First, the body and back edge of the blade are covered in a clay mixture to partially insulate it from heat. Then the exposed edge is hardened by heating it to a great temperature followed by a quick cooling in water. This process leaves a pattern along the cutting edge of the blade that is the hallmark of a traditionally forged Japanese blade.

The hardened edge is actually a type of crystalline steel known to modern science as *martensite*, and is the same sort of steel that modern razor blades are made of. It is about as hard as steel can get, but unfortunately it is brittle and will crack and chip rather than bend or dent. The body of the blade, having been protected by the clay insulator, remains a softer and more flexible type of steel known as *pearlite*. The shape of the *hamon* is formed by the boundary where the *martensite* meets the *pearlite*. This combination of a tough flexible body and an extremely hardened edge is one of the keys to the Japanese sword's extraordinary cutting ability.

Bringing out the details of the *hamon* is a primary goal of the sword polisher. There are two styles of finish for the temper line, *sashikomí* and *keisho*. *Sashikomí* is a natural finish that lets the shape of the temper line stand out on its own with little enhancement. *Keisho* finish, on the other hand, uses little slips of fine polishing stone



Fig. 3

to whiten all of the area around the actual temper line. Of the two, *krisho* is by far the more common style finish used in Japan today.

I finished this blade's *hamon* in a *sashikomi* or natural style, which I judged to be the best finish option for this particular sword, resulting in the *hamon* having many high narrow peaks that reach almost to the ridgeline. If a *krisho* style finish had been chosen, much of the grain pattern detail between the peaks of the *hamon* would have been lost. In fact, the majority of the lower surface of the blade would have been whitened, as well. This blade's owner has a preference for *sashikomi* style finish, whenever possible.

This particular sword has what could be considered an aggressive *hamon* pattern. In contrast to the placid straight line, wave, and lobe patterns often found on Japanese swords, this blade has a stark pattern consisting of a series of jagged peaks, and the great width of the *hamon* suggests that it was a sword meant for extensive use in battle. When a blade of this type is used in actual combat, the edge will sometimes become chipped from striking armor, other weapons, or bone. A wide *hamon* allows the chips to be polished out of the edge without losing much of the hard steel and destroying the blade's useful cutting ability.

The portion of the *hamon* that wraps around the point is called the *boshi* (fig. 3). This is one of the most important features of the blade and is considered the "face" of the sword, and is by far the most difficult part of the sword to correctly polish. It takes great skill and special tools, such as the wooden spring jig, called a *narume-dai*, to properly bring out the subtle features of the *boshi*.

Another eye-catching feature of any good Japanese sword is the beautiful grain pattern. This is very hard to photograph and reproduce in print, but is somewhat visible in figure four. This pattern is a result of the unique forging process. Construction begins with a core of softer iron, which is very tough and is much easier to produce than the fine, high carbon skin steel. It is resistant to breaking, although by itself it is not very rigid or hard. Around this core is wrapped the fine skin steel, or *ji-gane*, which has been forged and folded over many times to remove impurities and establish a uniform consistency. This folding process also results in the formation of an internal grain structure which, when expertly polished, presents a beautiful surface pattern called *ji-hada*. The many layers of the skin steel give lateral stability and make the blade more rigid and resistant to bending.



Fig. 4

The upper surface of this blade is adorned with an engraving, or *horimono*. In this case, it is a simple, yet well executed set of parallel grooves, or *hi*, running the entire length of the blade. These grooves increase the overall aesthetic beauty of the blade, but this is not their primary function. They are often referred to as “blood grooves” by westerners, yet this is a misnomer. The primary purpose of these grooves is to reduce the weight of the blade, thereby making it faster. A secondary effect is an increase in rigidity. This is a matter of structural physics — it’s the same principle whereby a steel “T” beam is more rigid than a beam of the same length and weight with a square cross section.

(to be continued in *LW&C* #21)

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A quest for vengeance wouldn't be complete without a little poison. Having tired of his retainer's futile attempts at reigning in the unstoppable samurai on his trail of vengeance, the shogun himself sends Abenno Kai, a master of poison, to join the Yagyu in their hunt for ronin Ito Ogami and his little boy Daigoro, also known as Lone Wolf and Cub. Armed with a sack full of poison and a network of streetwalking spies, Abenno creeps ever nearer to the father and son, each move bringing him one step closer to his prey. Soon Ogami and Daigoro find themselves surrounded on all sides, facing deadly secret agents, murderously seductive prostitutes, and a river of poison flowing all around them! The Eisner and Harvey Award winning series rolls ever onward.

"Lone Wolf and Cub is one of those rare achievements in comics, a perfectly crafted story equal parts epic and intimate. Truly awe inspiring."

—Brian Michael Bendis
writer/artist, *Jinx*, *Goldfish*, *Fortune* and *Cloak*

Published for the first time in America in the Japanese format.

■ HARVEY AWARD WINNER

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Front cover artwork by
MATT WAGNER

子連太郎